

Five more years of Social Contract and Coalition?

No vote to Labour!

As the Callaghan government's term of office grinds ingloriously to a close, every union bureaucrat, every parliamentary 'left' and virtually every ostensibly revolutionary organisation is falling into line behind Labour in preparation for the coming elections. Having meekly acquiesced to phase four of income controls and buried all talk of fighting the government's austerity policies, the TUC tops recently announced the formation of 'Trade Unions for a Labour Victory' to raise money and pull out the vote for Callaghan. Meanwhile, Benn and the other 'left' stalwarts of Lib-Lab coalitionism -- fresh from endorsing every anti-working-class action taken by the government during the past four years, from the Social Contract to the smashing of the firemen's strike -- have taken to hailing the government's accomplishments and campaigning for 'unity' against Thatcher.

Not to be outdone, the various fake-Trotskyist organisations have added their feeble voices to the pro-Labour chorus. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) and the International Marxist Group's (IMG) 'Socialist Unity' electoral bloc all plan to run candidates in a number of parliamentary constituencies, while canvassing for the return of the Labour government in the rest. The Workers Socialist League goes even further, opposing any attempt to run left-wing candidates against Labour, and at the same time continuing its plaintive pleas for the Tribune 'lefts' to start fighting the party leadership.

Perhaps most craven of all are the partisans of the International-Communist League (I-CL)-supported newspaper *Workers' Action*, who have linked up with the Chartist group to launch a 'Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory' (SCLV). These pretend revolutionaries have gathered the signatures of a couple of Tribune MPs, three prospective parliamentary candidates, some long-time social-democratic constituency activists and a sprinkling of union bureaucrats like Arthur Scargill, for the founding manifesto of their campaign. This document (in the words of SCLV spokesman Stephen Corbishley, 'roughly adequate for the tasks in hand') proudly an-

nounces that the SCLV will help in 'rejuvenating the Labour Party and the labour movement':

'We believe that it is the left wing of the party which can provide the greatest reserves of energy and enthusiasm....

'We will attempt to draw new forces into the party to strengthen its work and help break down the barriers between voters and those they elect, between representatives and represented, between politics and daily life.'

And when these barriers are razed to the ground, the SCLV proposes to fight for 'rational, democratic, human (!) control over the economy, to make the decisive sectors of industry social property, under workers' control' -- a programme which is, if anything, vaguer and more mealy-mouthed than the Labour Party's famous Clause Four.

In the looking-glass world of the SCLV, workers are told that 'gains they have made in the field of wages, jobs, of education and health services ... can best be defended with a Labour government in office'! Women workers in particular should rejoice -- after all wasn't it 'the stand of women Labour MPs [which] was instrumental in defeating the Benyon and James White abortion bills'; and didn't they also pass the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts which 'however limited are important gains for women that could never have come about under the Tories'? All workers should thus unite to give praise to the Labour Party for its bountiful munificence and, accordingly, should return it to office -- in order to better defend such 'gains' as lost jobs, ravaged health and education services, and ever-shrinking pay packets! The SCLV programme is in short the political equivalent of St Ignatius Loyola's *Prayer for Generosity*:

'Teach us, good Lord, to serve Thee as Thou deservest:
To give and not to count the cost ...
To labour and not ask for any reward
Save that of knowing that we do Thy will.'

The Spartacist League will no more prostrate itself before Labour than before the God of the Jesuits. In the forthcoming elections we refuse to give even the most critical electoral support

to Labour precisely because of its past record of wage-slashing, job-cutting and power-sharing with the Liberals.

In 1974, many workers believed that, if it won the elections, Labour would end the attacks on living standards and the trade unions that the Heath government had carried out. But who believes such things about Labour today? The SCLV perhaps, for whom the wish is father to the thought. But not so the millions of workers who have been on the receiving end of Callaghan's attempts to solve capitalism's economic impasse at *their* expense. Any ostensibly revolutionary organisation which counsels votes for Labour today, when there is *no* contradiction to exploit between the party's words and what it will do in office, demonstrates its utter incapacity to build a credible alternative proletarian leadership to Callaghan & Co.

Critical support ... and when to withdraw it

The extension of critical support to mass reformist workers parties when they stand against bourgeois parties is a tactic which revolutionaries can use as a means of exposing the pro-capitalist leaderships of those parties and splitting away their mass base. Thus in both British general elections of 1974, the Spartacist tendency extended critical support to Labour. We pointed out that the purpose of critical support was both to draw the class line against Heath's Conservatives, and 'to produce the political conditions for splitting the mass reformist parties into their component parts, the petty-bourgeois pro-capitalist leadership and the labor aristocracy on the one hand, and a section of the base which wishes to pursue the class struggle on the other' (*Workers Vanguard* no 39, 1 March 1974).

Labour's ascension to power at that time facilitated the exposure of Wilson and Foot as the loyal administrators of British capitalism and showed up their verbal radicalism for the empty bawling that it was. It *furthered* the struggle to destroy politically the Labour Party, the

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Demonstrations defend Long Kesh prisoners

5000 demonstrators marched in London on July 9 in solidarity with the current protest campaign by Republican inmates of Long Kesh's H-Blocks and other British prison camps in Northern Ireland, who are demanding that the British government restore political status to Republican prisoners. Solidarity with the Long Kesh protest was also a focus of a demonstration held on August 15, called by Provisional Sinn Fein to mark the seventh anniversary of the introduction of internment.

Militant contingents from the Spartacist League participated in both demonstrations (pictured is the SL contingent on the July 9 march), raising such slogans as: 'Smash Britain's torture camps!', 'Free all victims of imperialist repression!' and 'Troops out now! Not orange against green but class against class -- for a workers republic in Ireland!'



Spartacist Britain

Labour...

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major obstacle to proletarian revolution in Britain.

But critical support is by no means an invariable tactic, which must be applied every time an election is called. Part of its value lies in the fact that it can be withdrawn as necessary. Particularly since the inauguration of the Social Contract in August 1975 the Labour government has increasingly been, not just a pro-bourgeois instigator of third-rate piecemeal reforms, but the brazen unashamed policeman of the capitalist class. Callaghan, top bourgeois agent in the workers movement, has more and more often appeared, not in plain clothes, but swaggering in the uniform and regalia of the strong-arm Labour gendarmierie.

In 1975-76 the Social Contract cut sharply into workers' living standards, provoking major and deep-rooted resentment, which a revolutionary propaganda group could seek to intersect by a qualitative hardening of its opposition to Labour -- supplementing unremitting denunciation by refusing to give critical support in by-elections. With the consolidation and deepening of Labour's class collaboration in the Lib-Lab pact, a sharp rupture with the betrayers became even more vital for revolutionaries. This policy of hard opposition to Labour -- including no electoral support -- must be continued today as the only means of prising militant workers from the grip of the reformists and winning them to a communist alternative.

The 'theories' propounded by the revisionist left in Britain generally outlaw such a turn. The centrist Workers Power (WP) group recently expressed succinctly the almost universal conception that electoral support to Labour is some kind of unchangeable imperative:

'As long as the masses wish to keep "their" parties in government rather than allow the open bourgeois parties to rule we support this elementary act of class consciousness.' ('Theses on Elections', *Workers Power* no 6, Summer 1978)

Revolutionaries do not base their tactical manoeuvres against Labour on the consciousness of the relatively undifferentiated masses. The whole purpose of tactical manoeuvres towards the Labour Party like critical support is to intersect those Labour supporters whom it will be most possible to split away from social democracy, ie the *minority* at the *highest* level of consciousness.

Waiting for Labour's base to come over *en masse*, in a millennial big bang which would cleave Labour once and for all along neat class lines, is a passive, capitulatory posture (best exemplified by the Militant group). It effectively renounces in advance the Leninist strategy of splitting the Labour Party in favour of its *opposite* -- a tailist strategy of subordination to the reformists. Concretely, helping the Labour Party to return to office today, when workers have no illusions that it will pursue a militant pro-working-class policy, in no way aids in winning advanced militants to the Trotskyist programme. Instead it can only help tie those workers to their treacherous leaders -- turning the Leninist tactic of critical support into an opportunist 'article of faith' in the Labour traitors.

Illusions and betrayal

The Leninist spirit which should motivate the critical support tactic can be illustrated by considering the following: Let us imagine that the Labour Party leadership, or its left wing, calls a mass demonstration ostensibly in support of a hard-pressed strike. Revolutionaries know that the Labour leaders will never adopt the methods necessary to win the strike, that they are only calling the demonstration in response to pressure from below, and that they will use any prestige they may gain through leading the march to try to compromise and break the strike.

Nevertheless, given that the reformist traitors are still capable of mobilising thousands of workers for a demonstration called to support an end which we support, we would urge all workers to participate in the demonstration and would participate in it ourselves. We would warn against the treachery of the reformists, and during the demonstration would agitate for militant tactics -- trying to expose the reformists' unwillingness and inability to achieve the goals for which they claimed to have called the demonstration. We would argue to the rank-and-file participants that *our* strategy is the only way to achieve victory.

The case is not fundamentally altered when a workers party stands independently for elections on a programme which claims to advance workers' interests against the bourgeoisie. Standing as an independent organisation of the working class, the reformists *appear* to be counterposed politically to the capitalist parties. When they take office on this basis, they are in a position which allows revolutionaries to expose them and win away their base.

But suppose that the same reformists, under different circumstances, organised a demonstration to cross picket lines with the intention of breaking a strike, presenting this as the only sane policy which will prevent an 'irresponsible' blow to an ailing company's profitability. Wouldn't workers refuse to attend such a demonstration? Wouldn't any trade union leader who called such a demonstration be immediately ousted by his ranks? No, only in the dreamworld of centrist muddleheads and workerist romantics do workers always struggle unendingly and spontaneously for their class interests oblivious to appeals to a sense of 'practicality'. If workers see no alternative leadership as a practical replacement for their existing leaders, and if these leaders have led them to one defeat after another, then they may conclude that there is nothing to do but acquiesce, to return to work under the nominal stewardship of their own organisation.

Now the question for all 'non-sectarians' who fear that refusal to support Labour in the coming elections would turn them into a pillar of salt: would you support -- ever so 'critically' of course -- a strikebreaking march led by the reformists, in order to 'expose' them? (Perhaps organising a 'Socialist Campaign for a Scab Victory' on a 'roughly adequate' programme?)

Thoroughgoing Labour-loyalists like the I-CL et al might, but authentic Marxists would *not* give any kind of support to such a reformist-organised action. There is no basis for critical support when the reformists, *regardless* of how much mass support they may continue to retain, are not claiming to build a class alternative of *any* sort, but are *openly* collaborating with the bourgeoisie to smash the workers.

Labour today

An analogous situation will face revolutionaries in the coming elections. Four years after the October 1974 Labour victory, Callaghan will be seeking to stay in office. But those four years have been a bitter education for workers who saw in Wilson, Foot and Benn the answer to Edward Heath and the Conservatives. Who now can imagine Callaghan declaiming on the 'right to work' as Wilson did after the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders occupation in Glasgow in 1971? Who now can conceive of -- who even remembers -- Tony Benn marching at the head of thousands of workers resisting redundancies; or the same Benn baying for the blood of heavy industry, with calls for the nationalisation of the twenty-five major monopolies at the Labour Party conference of 1973?

The 'leftism' of the early seventies is gone now, openly replaced by the real programme of social democracy: wage cuts, decaying social services and vanishing jobs; an increase in repression in Ireland through the despatch of SAS killers and the denial of political status to Republican prisoners; the deployment of the cops and the army to break strikes, from the Grunwick workers to the firemen. Ironically, of course, Callaghan's austerity measures have not succeeded in halting Britain's steady economic decline -- it remains, more than ever, 'the sick man of Europe'.

Capping these viciously anti-working-class measures, in March of last year Callaghan concluded a coalition deal with capitalism's junior party, the Liberals. This renunciation of the formal independence of the Labour Party from the bosses' parties was more than a simple codification of the preceding years of class collaboration. The creation and development of the Labour Party in the first two decades of this century occurred through a *break* with the Liberal Party, and set the British working class on the path of political action *as a class*. Despite a leadership and an ideology burdened with the lowest products of the petty-bourgeois mind (including a reverence for the monarchy and the church, an ingrained hostility to even verbal Marxism and a profound antagonism to class struggle) the formation of the Labour Party was a faltering, half-way step towards a genuine, programmatically independent party of the proletariat. Its creation was the creation of a strategic obstacle to proletarian revolution

within the workers movement.

By contrast the 1977 Lib-Lab coalition was a thoroughly bourgeois formation, consciously established as a stopper on class struggle. There can be no contradiction between the *formal* aims and programme of such a bloc and its *real* aims and programme. In that respect the Callaghan/Steel pact was precisely analogous to the popular fronts of the 1930s, with their written programmatic declarations tailored to the tastes of the French Radicals or the Spanish Azañas, or to the more recent Chilean and French popular fronts. Only a 'Marxist' with the mentality of a bourgeois lawyer can deny that these two phenomena are essentially identical.

But, not surprisingly, as the elections approach most British centrists and left reformists have proved happy to play that role. Some, like the SWP and IMG, are simply too attached to Labourism to even think of admitting that the Lib-Lab pact was important. The more sophisticated (like Workers Power), fixated by the open, egregious character of Labour's treachery *before* the coalition, blind themselves to the importance of the coalition itself. Consequently, they feel driven to elaborate new definitions of popular frontism to cover their tracks.

For example, although prepared in another context to call the Anti Nazi League a 'popular frontist coalition', WP claims for the purposes of remaining loyal to Labour that a popular front must be 'an electoral alliance involving a common programme, support for each other's candidates, a voting bloc in parliament and possibly a joint government (sharing of ministries)' -- no less!

But Workers Power downplays this 'question of questions', decrying as 'nonsense' any suggestion that Trotskyists should refuse votes for workers parties in popular-frontist formations, and ridiculing the notion that the Lib-Lab coalition is anything other than 'one of a series of parliamentary blocs'. Not surprising, really, given that WP is currently gearing up to help campaign 'socialistically' for a Labour victory, as the left flank of the SCLV.

By contrast, authentic Marxists recognised the formation of the coalition last year was something qualitatively new -- a formal agreement to collaborate on government policy with a capitalist party. The duty of revolutionaries was to reassert class struggle *against* the bourgeois bloc, not to 'critically' help the strangulation of proletarian independence. Forcing the break of Callaghan's deal with the Liberals through class struggle would have put the Labour leaders fairly on the spot, denying any buffer between themselves and the pressure of the working class. This had to be the axis of any revolutionary policy against reformism during the period of the coalition.

Today the coalition has been ended by the Liberals in a separation of electoral convenience. But Labour's programme has not changed -- no rupture from coalitionism towards class independence has occurred. Callaghan, Benn and the rest of the coalitionists stand by the declarations of loyalty to ailing capitalism which laid the basis for and accompanied the Lib-Lab pact. They demand workers' votes for a continued, unadorned programme of capitalist austerity.

It is in this context that we say, 'No vote to Labour!' Why should workers turn out to vote for five more years of wage control? Because Thatcher's Tories will be worse, while the lick-spittles of the ostensibly 'anti-Labour' left. Margaret Thatcher is certainly a grotesque reactionary, but even if her government might be worse than Callaghan's, it would be worse only in the most minor, quantitative terms -- and at any rate this is irrelevant to the question of critical support. The vast majority of workers continue to vote Labour at present, not because they have illusions in Callaghan & Co or because they think Thatcher will be very much worse, but only because there is no credible alternative working-class leadership. To aim to put Labour back in power today is a policy of capitulation to demoralisation and betrayal -- a policy which blocks the fight for Trotskyist leadership in the working class.

Standing out on the British left, the Spartacist tendency has refused to submerge itself in the cesspit of Labour-loyalism. In *Workers Vanguard* no 134 (19 November 1976), writing of the by-elections in Walsall North, Workington and Newcastle Central, we said:

'In the present conjuncture, the necessity to provide a clear lead against the "Social Contract" is the central and overriding issue, the issue around which the possibility of

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French LCR defends 'socialist' generals and admirals

'Eurotrotskyists' fête Eurocommunists

It was a Pabloist's dream come true: a star-studded gallery of Eurocommunist notables, prominent social democrats, 'progressive' generals and Soviet dissidents, all brought to you courtesy of the French Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR). Not content with the company in the little cesspool of 'far-left' opportunism, these pseudo-Trotskyists have been looking for an opportunity to jump into the reformist swamp of class betrayal where they can swim with the big boys. They saw their chance and leaped with both feet, turning the LCR's *Rouge* Fête into a gala weekend in honor of Eurocommunism. More than 10,000 attended the May 27-28 gathering at the Porte de Pantin on the outskirts of Paris, entitled 'May 1968-May 1978: Reform or Revolution?'

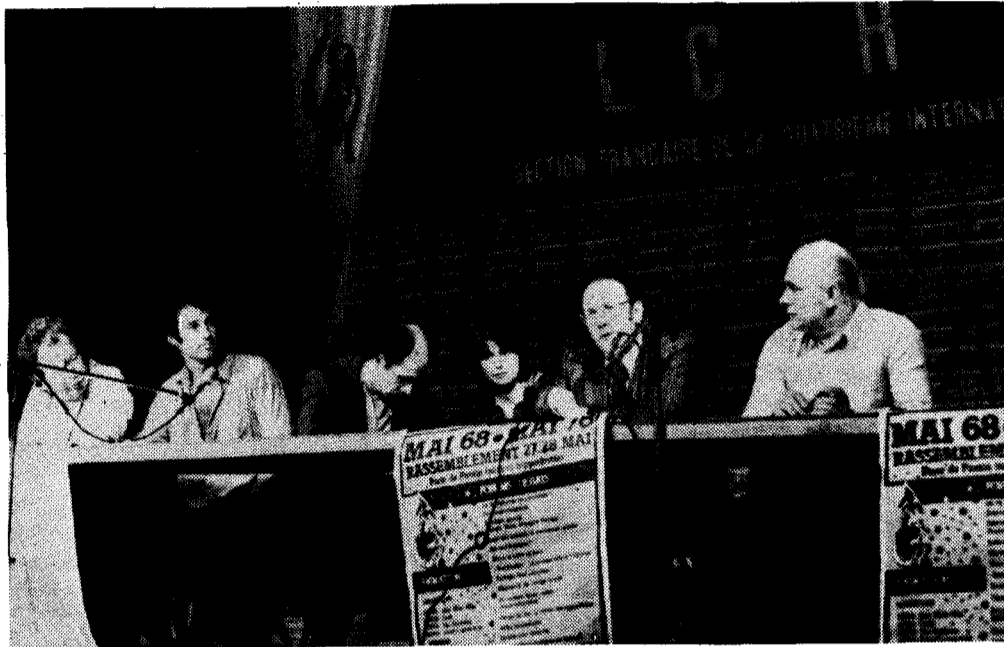
The LCR lost no time making clear which it was for. In this grand celebration of classless 'democracy', they courted the right-wing Communist Party (PCF) dissidents, who in recent weeks have become the darlings of the bourgeois press, and defended 'socialist' officers of the French imperialist armed forces against enraged protest from the audience....

The weekend fête was indeed designed to capitalize on the current uproar in the PCF, which has spilled over into a heated public controversy, as leading party intellectuals have taken to the pages of *Le Monde*, the leading French daily, to denounce the PCF leadership as responsible for the recent electoral defeat of the Union of the Left. Neo-Stalinist philosopher Louis Althusser published a four-part copyrighted series entitled 'Things Can't Go On This Way in the Communist Party', and historian [Jean] Elleinstein, deputy director of the PCF's Center for Marxist Studies, called in his series for dropping the name 'Communist' as a liability before French public opinion. At the *Rouge* Fête the LCR provided a platform for the most thoroughgoing Eurocommunists seeking to pressure those CPers resistant to exchanging pro-Soviet Stalinist reformism for anti-Soviet social-democratic reformism.

Although at first glance the speakers' platforms at the fête appeared contrary to nature, there was in fact a political logic uniting PCF right wingers with LCR 'far leftists': both accused the Communist Party leadership of being responsible for the March 19 electoral defeat of 'the left' by breaking the 'unity momentum'. This charge, raised by a 'Declaration of 100' PCF militants (*Le Monde*, 17 May), is the theme of a propaganda barrage initiated by PS [Socialist Party] leader Mitterrand and picked up by virtually the entire bourgeois press. It ignores the fact that the PCF's reflexive 'hardening' came in response to threats to its electoral base by the Socialists and indications from Mitterrand that the PCF would have little effective power in a Union of the Left government. Thus the Pabloists and super-Eurocommunists find common ground on the rightist program of unconditional unity of the reformist bureaucrats.

Commenting afterwards on the star-studded weekend, the LCR's first crack at the big time, LCR leader Alain Krivine underscored the significance of the *Rouge* Fête.

'For us this was not a publicity stunt or a



Le Bolchevik

From left, 'premature Eurocommunist' Fernando Claudin, LCR leader Henri Weber, Ukrainian dissident Leonid Plyushch and translator, French CP dissident Jean Elleinstein and French Socialist Party National Secretary Gilles Martinet

factional operation, but the application of a policy for which we have been fighting for years and years, frequently against the stream: the policy of the unity of the working people in action against the common enemy ... the breach has been opened, the precedent set, nothing will be the same as before.'
(*Rouge*, 30 May)

Discovery of 'Eurotrotskyism'

Leading off the discussion on Eurocommunism Elleinstein reaffirmed his support to a Union of the Left and declared that 'unity is debate'. This was music to the ears of the LCR, which had been seeking debates with the PCF ever since well before the March elections. Elleinstein also called for joint action between the Eurocommunists and the LCR, between 'we who are in the Party and you who are a vital force but who today are feeling the dead end you are in'. But the basis for such collaboration, he specified, must be:

'... a line which of course is neither that of Stalin nor of Mao, but which is also not that of Lenin or Trotsky, a path which is the original path toward socialism imposed on us by history and is precisely, I'll say it: the Eurocommunist path.'

This meant, said Elleinstein, first of all support for 'representative democracy' and the 'extension of public liberties'. He added, 'I think that in many respects Rosa Luxemburg was right in 1918 in criticizing certain aspects of the Russian Revolution', endorsing in particular her claim that 'lack of representative democracy' would lead to 'the domination of a bureaucracy'.

'Eurocommunism', said the PCF historian, 'implies total independence from the Soviet Union'. The representative of the PCE [Spanish Communist Party], Malo de Molina, declared that it 'assumes the negation of the model of the Soviet revolution, the model of class against class, and the model according to which one must end up with the destruction of the state'. Neither here nor at any time in the weekend did the LCR defend the Leninist 'model' or even mention the need for defense of the Soviet degenerated workers state against imperialism.

There were a few murmurs from the audience when Molina praised the Italian Communist Party's austerity policy as a 'theoretical innovation' and went so far as to oppose cost-of-living escalators as 'inflationary'. LCR spokesmen attacked this apology for the anti-working-class, wage-cutting policies of the Andreotti and Suárez governments, but refused to criticize

the policies of the French Union of the Left. Not only did they fail to denounce this coalition as a popular front, tying the working class to the bourgeoisie, but throughout the weekend these fake-Trotskyists hardly even mentioned the Communist-Socialist-Left Radical bloc which has dominated French politics for the past six years.

In contrast there was stormy applause when PS national secretary Martinet, an ex-Stalinist and Krivine's father-in-law, denounced anti-Trotskyism as 'the anti-Semitism of the workers movement'. Fernando Claudin, the former member of the PCE central committee expelled in 1964 for ultra-reformist positions similar to those of the present-day Eurocommunists, went even further, suggesting that the debate be extended to include 'Eurotrotskyism', since they were in the presence of 'non-sectarian' Trotskyists:

'... this is perhaps the sign that there is also a "Eurotrotskyist" phenomenon, that is a certain opening of Trotskyism toward other currents of the communist movement.'

In response, LCR leader Daniel Bensaïd returned the compliment and went out of his way to demonstrate the compatibility of 'Eurotrotskyism' with social-democratizing Eurocommunism. Thus he defended the Pabloist perversion of Trotskyism against charges of 'underestimating the struggle for democratic rights' by saying: 'It seems there is agreement -- everyone says "representative democracy, democratic rights," and we defend them too....' Bensaïd also solidified with Rosa Luxemburg's critique of the Russian Revolution for 'limiting freedom of the press, limiting freedom of association, which leads to sclerosis of democracy' and approved of Elleinstein's use of this reference which has been cited for decades by social democrats as part of their attack on Leninism.

In answer to Claudin's opposition of parliamentary to non-parliamentary forms of democracy, Bensaïd made a fundamental and far-reaching revision of Leninism on the central question of the state:

'You will find the debate on the articulation of parliamentary democracy and grassroots democracy with Lenin vs Kautsky on the subject of the constituent assembly in Russia, you will find it between Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin on the same problem, you will find it in Trotsky, you will find it broadly among some people who are coming back into style today, and not by accident, that is the Austro-Marxists like Adler. However (left-wing) social-democratic they were at the time, they said that parliamentary forms and forms of self-organization could cohabit, but that the

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SPARTACIST BRITAIN

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The real lessons of Cuba



Fidel Castro with Khrushchev at 1964 reception in Moscow

[The first half of this article appeared in Spartacist Britain no 3, July-August.]

'Perhaps, for scientific purposes, it is best to consider all these states [Eastern Europe, China, etc] degenerated workers' states -- born in a degenerated form precisely because they were born through the process of extension of the degenerated workers' state.' (Tim Wohlforth, 'The Theory of Structural Assimilation', *Communists' Against Revolution*, p 89)

This is how Wohlforth summarised his 'structural assimilation' theory in 1964 -- that a 'defensive expansionist' drive of the Soviet Union led to the creation of the new bureaucratically-ruled workers states in the post-war period. In seeking to revive Wohlforth's long discredited and ignored theory and apply it to the Cuban Revolution, the centrist Workers Socialist League and its ally Adam Westoby face a rather daunting task.

Review of 'Communists' Against Revolution' by Tim Wohlforth and Adam Westoby

The theory is clearly in flat contradiction to the facts of the Third Chinese Revolution (from which the Soviet bureaucracy kept its distance) and the Yugoslav Revolution (which the Soviet Union had virtually nothing to do with). Thus in his essay in *Communists' Against Revolution* Westoby seeks to apologise for Wohlforth's obvious errors, admitting that the Communist Parties of these countries are 'parties which have "independently" taken state power'.

However, in the case of Cuba -- the focus of the most important discussions in the ostensibly Trotskyist movement on the post-war social transformations -- the revolution was led by petty-bourgeois guerrillas having no links with the USSR. Deprived of the argument that Stalinist parties led the revolution Westoby and the WSL feel compelled to fall back on the bald assertion -- which flies in the face of all historical evidence -- that the Kremlin really was the key agency of social transformation. This position, shared only by a few of the most extreme cold-warriors of imperialism, is the starkest example of the contradiction between the grey 'theory of structural assimilation' and the green reality of life.

'One damn thing after another'?

At the June 15 WSL public meeting in London which launched the book, Westoby and WSL leader Alan Clinton tried to debunk the Spartacist tendency's analysis of the formation of the Cuban deformed workers state by claiming that our method was to look at 'just one damn thing after another'. Inculcated with the Healyite view that concern for factual accuracy is tantamount to anti-Marxist 'empiricism', they apparently consider that matching theory to reality, to actual events in the order in which they occur, is a profound betrayal of Marxism! In fact the WSL leaders want freedom from histori-

cal truth so that they can create enough confusion to thoroughly befuddle their membership. Spartacist insistence on 'one damn thing after another' is quite a handicap in this 'methodological' exercise.

The account of the Cuban Revolution presented by Westoby (with the assistance of the WSL's Bob Sutcliffe) in *Communists' Against Revolution* is simply shoddy historical falsification. Westoby and Sutcliffe claim that, following the overthrow of the Batista dictatorship at the beginning of 1959, the new regime headed by Castro's government was a *capitalist* state. This state was then gradually transformed into a deformed workers state, without benefit of another subsequent revolution.

Moreover, the closest thing to a decisive, qualitative break in this whole reformist Kautskyan 'process' was not the massive expropriations of capitalist property which occurred in 1960 (these are never mentioned in Westoby/Sutcliffe's entire analysis). Rather it was a decision taken in the Kremlin during the missile crisis of 1962, a full eighteen months later. Westoby writes:

'In the Cuban missile crisis, for example, matters were settled (including the class nature of the state in Cuba) direct on the telephone between Washington and Moscow with scarcely a reference back to Havana on Khrushchev's part.' (Westoby, p 134, our emphasis)

It is hard to believe that even the WSL could believe this, so far removed is it from historical reality.

What did happen in Cuba from 1959 to 1962? Our article 'Guerrillas in Power' (*Workers Vanguard* no 102, 26 March 1976) and the materials in *Marxist Bulletin* no 8 give a thorough picture of the social transformation, and explain it from the point of view of Marxism. But we will outline these events again here, in order to pin down the monstrosities of the WSL account and lay bare their political origins and implications.

The key event which made the overthrow of capitalism possible was the *smashing* of the bourgeois state at the start of 1959. Batista's thoroughly corrupt and hated regime and its armed state apparatus were replaced by a new governing armed force based on Castro's Rebel Army. The old officer caste largely fled to the US, while the fragmented remnants of the army and police were entirely reorganised under the command of the former guerrillas.

The government established by the 26 July Movement was a coalition of former guerrilla leaders and liberal politicians. Its first major act was the Agrarian Reform Law of May 1959, which expropriated large landowners and provided a minimum holding for all peasants. The conflict between this part of the 26 July Movement's radical nationalist programme and the short-term interests of sections of the Cuban bourgeoisie and middle class alienated the right wing of the new government, beginning a process of internal differentiation among the ruling elite. This accelerated the exodus of the Cuban bourgeoisie to Miami, and led the American State Department to abandon its initial attitude of cautious welcome to Castro.

Which side would control Cuba's Rebel Army: the bourgeois liberal Hubert Matos or the utopian Stalinist Che Guevara? What would be the position of Castro, a former radical bourgeois politician alienated from his class background and roots by years of guerrilla struggle? Would he end up a Stalinist bureaucrat committed to defending socialised property, or would he become a Latin American bourgeois nationalist à la Sukarno and Nehru? The answers to these questions had not yet been decided by history.

The Cuban political-military regime of 1959-early 1960 was not a capitalist state, as the WSL would have it. The government of a capitalist state does not fracture down the middle, with the decisive section of it opting to expropriate the bourgeoisie and establish a socialised economy.

Rather Castro's was a petty-bourgeois government standing at the head of an armed force and administrative apparatus which was temporarily autonomous of the chief rival class forces -- proletariat and bourgeoisie. Although the primary economic relationships in the country remained capitalist until late 1960, the Castro regime was by no means committed to defending private ownership of the means of production. At the same time it was not committed to defending the collectivised property forms of a proletarian state. It took a whole series of events -- precipitated above all by the hardening of US imperialist opposition to Castro, and including a *split* in the Cuban government -- before the new ruling power decisively opted for expropriation of the capitalist class and defence of proletarian property forms.

Even on those rare occasions like the Cuban Revolution when petty-bourgeois forces are able to seize power *without* a decisive commitment to defending specific property forms, they cannot rule for long without coming down decisively in defence of capitalism or of socialised property. 'Petty-bourgeois property forms' or a 'petty-bourgeois state' are historical impossibilities. The absence of any substantial independent working-class mobilisation in Cuba allowed the class character of the new political-military apparatus to remain undetermined for a brief period, slowing down the split in the petty bourgeoisie which would have occurred in a much sharper and faster way under the impact of more powerful class struggle.

In the words of Lenin, 'The state is a product and a manifestation of the *irreconcilability* of class antagonisms' ('State and Revolution', *Collected Works* vol 25, p 387, emphasis in original). But the class struggle, held briefly in check, had yet to produce out of Castro's regime a state committed to defending bourgeois or proletarian property forms. As one emigré later put it, Castro was for a time "freer" than most historical figures have ever been because he found himself in a political vacuum, supported by popular enthusiasm' (B Goldenberg, *The Cuban Revolution and Latin America*, p 297). This could not last -- indeed the events of the year 1960 definitively determined the class nature of Cuba.

Expropriation of the bourgeoisie as a class

Early 1960 saw the first tentative steps in Soviet-Cuban relations, which culminated in a February deal on sugar imports, followed by an agreement which provided for the importation of Soviet crude oil. These moves were inspired by America's by-now palpably hostile attitude; moreover the Castro government desired to achieve a degree of freedom for Cuba from its historical status as a client state of the US (a desire which had been a long-standing part of the outlook of Cuban nationalism).

In June 1960 Shell, Esso and Texaco refused to refine the Soviet crude. US president Eisenhower backed this stand with a request to Congress that America's sugar import quota for Cuba be cut. Castro nationalised the recalcitrant oil monopolies on June 29 and declared the expropriation of major US companies on July 7. On the same day Eisenhower imposed a total embargo on sugar imports. This belligerence threatened to crash the Cuban economy, which relies in a wildly lopsided way on the sugar industry.

On July 20 the USSR agreed to buy the sugar that the US had embargoed and on August 6 major nationalisations of US property began, starting primarily with sugar mills and going on to US banks in mid-September. The alienation of the Cuban bourgeoisie (expressed in attempts to close down factories) led to nationalisations of

Cuban industry and finance on October 13. This was met in turn by a US embargo on *all* trade (except food and medical supplies) on October 19-20. Less than a week later virtually all remaining US property in Cuba was nationalised.

By the end of 1960 eighty percent of all industrial capacity was in the hands of the state. The surviving non-agricultural private property constituted, in the words of Hugh Thomas, 'an army of shoemakers, carpenters, small tobacco factories, garages' (*Cuba*, p 1336).

This was the final blow for the Cuban bourgeoisie. A net 62,379 people emigrated from Cuba in 1960; another 67,468 left in 1961, according to official government figures (which are probably too conservative). The emigrés were overwhelmingly capitalists, managers and pro-capitalist professional and technical staff (Archibald Ritter, *The Economic Development of Revolutionary Cuba*, p 93), and included most pro-bourgeois right-wing elements from the first post-Batista government.

The Cuban bourgeoisie had been destroyed as a class. *Newsweek* of 24 October 1960 put it simply: 'Private enterprise died in Cuba last week.' The appetite for privilege and the Bonapartist role of the petty-bourgeois Castroites would henceforth be exercised in their capacity as the world's newest Stalinist bureaucrats.

Kautskyism and the state

The WSL rejects the view that the destruction of the capitalist state by Castro's guerrilla movement and the expropriation of the capitalist class in late 1960 were decisive in the creation of the Cuban deformed workers state. When challenged on this at the June 15 public meeting Bob Sutcliffe insisted there were no *decisive* nationalisations -- rather there was a *process* of nationalisations in '1959, 1961, 1962, 1963 and all the way up to 1968'.

This is simple, wilful dishonesty. Westoby, Sutcliffe & Co know very well that the mass expropriations of the bourgeoisie in 1960 were not comparable with the takeover of cemeteries and clothing stores which were the centrepieces of the 1961 and 1962 nationalisations -- and the only subsequent nationalisations of any significance were appropriations of rural land. Sutcliffe again attempted to wriggle away from reality when he blithely observed that the Cuban bourgeoisie was not destroyed in 1960 ... it was simply living in exile in Miami. What does he want? Perhaps in *real* revolutions the capitalists are vapourised!

Fundamentally, these attempts to downplay the role of Castro's guerrillas are based on the notion that there was a peaceful, *gradual* transformation from the capitalist state of 1959-60 to the workers state of October 1962. In this way the WSL has provided a wholesale endorsement of Kautsky's reformist view of the state. Like their theoretical forefather they do not understand that:

'The point is whether the old state machine ... shall remain, or be *destroyed* and replaced by a *new* one ... Kautsky slurs over this *basic* idea of Marxism, or he does not understand it at all.' (Lenin, 'State and Revolution', *Collected Works*, vol 25, p 486)

These blunders are essential not just to the WSL's Cuban fairy tale, but to the whole Wohlforth edifice.

Wohlforth and Westoby talk about the continued existence of capitalist states in post-war Eastern Europe (under Red Army occupation!) Westoby expostulates that the King of Romania

would have been surprised to find out that he did not preside over a capitalist state after World War II. Indeed King Michael may have been surprised -- but he was placed in power by Stalin as no more than a monarchic facade over Red Army rule, only to be unceremoniously dumped as the Romanian deformed workers state was consolidated a few years later.

The state is not just a figurehead, nor a government, nor an administrative bureaucracy. In Lenin's words, 'it mainly consists of special bodies of armed men, which have prisons etc, at their command' ('State and Revolution', pt 2, chap 1). Wohlforth's rejection of this fundamental proposition of Leninism is shown quite clearly when he approvingly quotes Ernest Mandel to the effect that a bourgeois state persisted up to 1952 in large sections of China. He remains unperturbed by one little observation of Mandel's: that 'Only [!] the armed power has been recast and represents an armed power with a different social character'.

Under the Soviet sun?

As we pointed out in the preface to 'Cuba and Marxist Theory':

'To be sure, the existence of the Russian de-generated workers state presented the encouragement of a model and, more important, the material support which made the outcome a practicality. But in no way did the Russians or their domestic enthusiasts directly create the actual process within Cuba itself.' (*Marxist Bulletin* no 8)

Except for Westoby and the WSL, virtually every serious commentator on the Cuban Revolution (including anti-communists eager to find 'Soviet subversion' everywhere) agrees that the USSR did not play the decisive role in the expropriation of capitalism and consolidation of a workers state in Cuba. As a right-wing academic, writing on Cuban-Soviet relations in the early years of the Castro government, put it:

'But in turning to the Soviets for help, he [Castro] found Moscow to be equivocal toward the Revolution and fearful of involvement in Cuba.' (E Gonzalez, 'Relationship with the Soviet Union' in C Mesa-Lago [ed], *Revolutionary Change in Cuba*, p 87)

The consolidation of close Soviet-Cuban relations (and the accompanying fusion of Castro's movement with the Cuban CP) was not the *cause*, but an *outcome* of the creation of the Cuban deformed workers state.

Yet the WSL, not content with adopting Kautsky's position on the state, apparently shares with Khrushchev the notion that the diplomatic and military strength of the USSR is sufficient to allow the development of non-capitalist countries without the violent overthrow of the capitalist state. For Westoby & Co, the form this revisionism takes is an argument that the Soviet nuclear shield is some kind of portable state which allows the 'structural assimilation' of any country which it is positioned to protect. Thus Westoby writes the following:

'...Cuba is not adjacent to the Soviet Union. The post-war development of both nuclear fusion (hydrogen) bombs and long-range missiles made this, however, less and less of a crucial factor. Like the forces of production themselves the nature of state (and military) power, has taken on not just international, but world-wide contours. The great states exercise power not just within their frontiers but on a world-wide basis.' (Westoby, p 134)

Here Westoby and the WSL cast off Lenin's materialist analysis of the state in favour of an ill-defined and mystical concept of an international state power based on the threat of nuclear war. They see such a threat, directed by the USSR against the USA, as having been sufficient to bring about a qualitative change in the nature of the Cuban domestic state power, from bourgeois to deformed workers state. This view allows the WSL to dodge the question of how a capitalist state, 'bound by thousands of threads to the bourgeoisie' ('State and Revolution'), could revolutionise itself, turning its guns *against* the capitalist class -- whilst apparently never snapping those threads.

It is of course true that the state defends a particular national ruling class against other ruling classes, and can be used to expand a country's territory, through war. But the state exists primarily to check class conflict *within* a country through repression of hostile classes by the ruling class. The *threat* of nuclear war is so abstracted from the state power's job of

daily coercing actual individuals (with 'special bodies of armed men', and 'prisons etc') that it cannot conceivably act as a surrogate state. The fact that modern great powers exercise political influence on an international scale does not change the character of states as repressive apparatuses rooted in the ruling classes of actual territories, and certainly does not allow them to travel through thin air.

Speaking at the WSL's 1977 summer school, *Socialist Press* editor John Lister tried to apply this whole incredible anti-Marxist theory of portable states to the Cuban events:

'But Khrushchev, to preserve his prestige at home and abroad needed to find some way of redressing the [arms] balance. The Cuban situation seemed to offer an opening for this, with the chance of establishing a low-cost military threat to the USA.

'If this were to proceed it would not be enough to have a nationalist regime in Havana -- Castro had to be drawn more and more into a bloc with the Kremlin, to ensure that there was a firm basis of support....

'The Cuban Communist Party also played its role in the Kremlin's efforts at sucking Castro into the Stalinist orbit ... under Moscow directives they began, shortly before the final fall of Batista, to move closer to Castro's movement.' (*Trotskyism Today* no 2, p 20)

Not only is this 'history' wilfully invented (as we have seen); it also has vast revisionist implications. Were it true that Soviet military might simply created the Cuban workers state from on high, then the WSL's rhetorical query 'What then is to prevent further Cubas?' would be impossible to answer. For given a certain amount of benevolent influence and attention from the Kremlin, nothing could prevent the creation of new deformed workers states *anywhere* which is deemed by the Soviet bureaucrats to be of sufficient military-strategic importance.

Why shouldn't Ethiopia, Angola, Afghanistan etc -- with their close trade and military connections with Russia -- be in the process of becoming deformed workers states today? Why, in their times of close relations with the USSR, did countries like Somalia or Egypt not travel along the Cuban road to expropriate the capitalist class?

Castro and Nasser

Perhaps the most striking example of the fallacy of 'structural assimilation' is provided by Nasser's Egypt in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Here we had a country of far more political-military importance than Cuba -- one of the most important states of both the Arab world and the African continent. A radical nationalist regime had taken power in the early 1950s and gradually established very close political, military and economic ties with the Soviet Union.

Spouting 'socialist' rhetoric, in 1961 the government undertook a series of massive nationalisations, and brought large sectors of the economy into the hands of the state. An official Egyptian parliamentary delegation which visited Moscow during that year was greeted by none other than Nikita Khrushchev, who told them that Nasser's government was bound to evolve towards communism 'because life imposes communism on man' (quoted in Walter Laqueur, *The Struggle for the Middle East*, p 69).

The parallel with Cuba seemed too obvious for the impressionistic fake-Trotskyists to resist jumping on this new bandwagon. United Secretariat leaders openly compared Egypt to Cuba, with Livio Maitan musing about the possibility of a 'cold' transformation of Egypt into a workers state.

So why *didn't* Egypt become a deformed workers state? By the WSL's theory *all* the necessary prerequisites were there -- extensive Soviet aid and influence, friendly Cairo-Moscow relations, influence enjoyed by Egyptian CP members in Nasser's government -- and this was combined with widespread nationalisations of private property. Moreover, in the words of historian Walter Laqueur:

'The Middle East is in geopolitical terms Russia's back garden; this at any rate is how Soviet leaders see it. They seem to believe that an area so close to their borders should become their sphere of influence.' (*ibid*, p 188)

There was but one thing missing -- a little thing which the WSL considers to have been entirely unnecessary for the 'structural assimilation' of Cuba. The ousting of King Farouk by

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'Eurotrotskyists'...

(Continued from page 3)

forms of self-organization must have the last word... As for us, we say it is necessary to take the question to its conclusion and say which should predominate.'

So ... instead of smashing the capitalist state, and with it bourgeois parliamentary forms of government, to replace it with the proletarian democracy of soviet rule, it is necessary to combine them, to 'articulate' them; and like the Austro-Marxists, this arch-Pabloist says that it is simply necessary to specify that forms of 'grassroots democracy' should predominate over parliamentary forms!

The reference to Austro-Marxism is, as Bensaïd remarks, not an accident. Together with the German Independent Social Democrats, the Austrian Socialist Party was the mainstay of the ill-fated 'Second and a Half International' set up in reaction to the proclamation of the Comintern, and Friedrich Adler was its architect. As far as the 'cohabitation' of parliamentary and soviet democracy, this program was actually carried out by the Austro-Marxists, who used their domination of the Vienna Workers Council to prevent any revolutionary attempt to sweep away the institutions of capitalist rule. In Berlin, where the Spartakusbund had found support among sectors of the proletariat, this 'articulation' was achieved by the bloody massacre of the January 1919 uprising and the assassination of Luxemburg and Liebknecht! Bensaïd will no doubt say that there the wrong element predominated, but it was only because the Independent Social Democrats refused to call for all power to the workers councils, instead hoping for peaceful coexistence between the councils and the national assembly, that the 'majority' social-democratic butchers Ebert, Scheidemann and Noske could carry out their bloody work, eventually suppressing the workers councils as well. These are the fruits of the tradition with which the 'Eurotrotskyists' solidarize!

Comrade Bensaïd has a history of getting carried away with whatever is the current line of the majority of the 'United Secretariat of the Fourth International' (USec), as when he proposed importing to Europe the USec's guerrillaist policy for Latin America. However, in this case he is simply making explicit the capitulationist policy toward Eurocommunism authored by the USec's top theoretician, Ernest Mandel. Thus in the introduction to his book, *From Stalinism to Eurocommunism*, Mandel refers to the Eurocommunist current as analogous to 'classical Social Democracy of 1910-1930, which should not be confused with contemporary Social Democracy'. Social Democracy before World War I, the world historic event which marked the passage of social democracy to the camp of defense of the bourgeois order? Without saying so explicitly, Mandel is implying that the Eurocommu-

nists have not yet definitively betrayed.

As for Bensaïd's defense of 'representative democracy' and political pluralism, this is already foreshadowed in the USec resolution on 'Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat' (*Inprecor*, 7 July 1977) in which the Pabloists reject the Trotskyist position of democratic rights for all parties standing on the gains of the October Revolution, instead calling for 'freedom for the defenders of reactionary ideologies [presumably including fascism] to defend these ideas, [for] ideological cultural pluralism' even for active counterrevolutionaries, just so long as they are not caught bomb-in-hand. The remarks by Bensaïd during this debate constitute a deliberate attempt to present a common platform on which the Eurocommunists and Pabloist 'Eurotrotskyists' can 'cohabit': namely, left-talking social democracy, formally independent of the Second International and modeled on post-World War I Austro-Marxism.

While Bensaïd's discourse on the 'articulation' of bourgeois and proletarian democracy provided the political framework for a Eurocommunist/'Eurotrotskyist' lash-up, it was in the forum on the army that the LCR most vividly demonstrated the depths to which it will descend in order to gain admission to the reformist swamp. Krivine, Bensaïd & Co have been assisting in the formation of a Committee for Rights and Freedoms in the Military Institution, organized by the bourgeois League for the Rights of Man with the participation of two ranking reserve officers, General Bécam and Admiral Sanguinetti. These two general staff officers had star billing in the oh-so-fraternal 'debate' on a podium chaired by the LCR leadership. [See box below.]

In a subsequent intervention during the debate an LTF [Ligue Trotskyiste de France] spokesman again denounced the presence of these professional butchers of the Vietnamese and Algerian peasants and workers. A second LTF comrade linked the LCR's incredible call for an 'alliance of the workers movement, the soliders movement, the career officers' to the Pabloistst's capitulation to popular frontism, and counterposed the revolutionary Trotskyist program of opposition to collaboration with the class enemy:

'Obviously the question of the army is the key question for a popular front. The LCR, if it wants to maintain its alliance with the popular front, its essentially popular-frontist policy, is compelled to have a reformist policy toward the army. Which, moreover, explains why they have also abandoned all their guerrillaist postures, ... while today they take the side of the bourgeois state against the Red Brigades in Italy....'

'The objective of Trotskyists in the army is to effectively defend the democratic rights of soldiers in the army -- but we link the defense of democratic rights with the goal of the destruction of the bourgeois army, the destruction of the officer corps, the constitution of workers militias, the creation of a Red Army with nuclear arms against the imperialist armies that will intervene....'

In a recent special issue of *Inprecor* devoted to the May 1968 events, the USec announced that its analyses in the post-1968 period had been too optimistic and called for Communist-Socialist parliamentary governments as the axis of its propaganda in southern Europe. In an interview Bensaïd remarked that 'everyone now agrees' that the elusive 'new mass vanguard' 'will be radicalized mainly in the reformist parties and the unions' (*Inprecor*, 25 May). Hence the USec's new orientation toward Eurocommunism. If Eurocommunists like PCE leader Carrillo and PCF dissident Elleinstein are ready to renounce Leninism, and 'Eurosociologists' like Spanish leader Felipe González renounce Marxism, then in order to get them into the act Mandel & Co are prepared to take off their tattered fake-Trotskyism as the price of admission in this obscene political striptease.

--adapted from *Workers Vanguard* no 210, 30 June 1978

Cuba...

(Continued from page 5)

Nasser in 1952 was not accomplished by 'smashing' the bourgeois state! Rather it was a coup d'état effected by the officer caste, which had absolutely no intention of carrying out a social transformation. This fact, so obvious and vital for a Marxist (but utterly trivial and irrelevant for the 'theoreticians' of 'structural assimilation') decisively differentiated Egypt 1952 from Cuba 1959, and precluded any possibility of Egypt's transformation into a workers state (except through another subsequent revolution). Thus the Egyptian nationalisations of 1961, while extensive, were of a qualitatively different character from those which had occurred in Cuba the previous year. Unlike Castro's expropriation of the bourgeoisie as a class, Nasser's nationalisations catered to military-bureaucratic corruption:

'The power of the traditional capitalist class was reduced but never eliminated. Its members diverted their investments towards parasitic activities outside government control such as real estate, black market activities, and wholesale trade.' (*MERIP Reports* no 56, 'Class Roots of the Sadat Regime', p 3)

Cuba and world revolution

'The Cuban way' cannot be a strategy for world socialism. The methods of guerrilla warfare cannot produce workers states with a conscious proletariat holding political power, but only (at best) bureaucratically deformed revolutions, topped by Stalinist cliques which are politically hostile to and incapable of leading the world-wide overthrow of capitalism. Even if we ignore this essential distinction (which the WSL does) it does not follow that the end of Castro's road is the international abolition of capitalism and its replacement by socialised property. The circumstances which allowed the creation of the Cuban deformed workers state (and similar states in China, Yugoslavia etc) are highly exceptional in the history of the development of capitalist countries.

The world socialist revolution will not come about except through the destruction of imperialism's heartlands in Europe, Japan, and North America. But future Cubas would require a sizeable and politically important population of rural oppressed as the base for sustained guerrilla warfare -- a situation which hardly pertains in the great imperialist states. And indeed the normal result of petty-bourgeois, radical nationalist insurgencies is either fiasco (as with Che Guevara's utopian adventure in Bolivia in 1967) or the establishment of a new bourgeois government in place of the preceding regime.

The Wohlforth/Westoby penchant for sweeping

CORRECTION

In part one of 'The Real Lessons of Cuba' (*Spartacist Britain* no 3, July-August), we wrote: 'However in Yugoslavia, China, North Korea and Vietnam the Red Army never occupied the country; in each case a petty-bourgeois guerrilla army shattered the bourgeois state power.'

North Korea clearly does not belong in this category. The Soviet Army occupied the northern half of Korea (which had been held by Japan) following the Second World War, while the United States occupied the southern half. A series of events parallel to those which occurred in Germany resulted in the formation of a deformed workers state in North Korea by the time the Soviet forces withdrew in 1949.

The 'progressive' generals vs the LTF

The following exchanges took place in the forum on the army at the Rouge fête sponsored by the French Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire. On the platform were 'socialists' General Bécam and Admiral Sanguinetti, who were repeatedly confronted by our comrades of the Ligue Trotskyiste de France.

Bécam: 'What do I think of the wars I participated in? Well, we participated in the World War in '39 to '45.... What helped the people who carried out these operations [bombing missions] not to pose these problems about what they were doing was the risk they ran. Because in spite of all the bombing gear they ran an absolutely enormous risk during the war and only one out of two survived....'

LTF: 'Bombed the German proletariat with a little risk -- that's what you were doing!'

Bécam: 'It was a question of beating German fascism....'

LTF: 'Hamburg was German fascism?!'

Bécam: '... and I do not regret this war at all, absolutely not. Then I was in the Indochinese war....'

* * * *

Sanguinetti: 'A draftee army is better able to maintain order.... You need numbers to search and destroy. When we had to carry out search and destroy operations in Algeria, our strength rose to two million men....'

LTF: 'It's a scandal, the way the speakers platform is composed....'

Chairman of the session protests: '... against the insults addressed to the Admiral inside this hall.'

Bécam: 'An army cannot be really efficient if it's not democratic.... There was a certain democracy in the Wehrmacht, that's why it was so efficient.... But you have to watch out for workers militias, they risk becoming even less democratic than the army.... There is an example of a workers militia: the German SA. A workers militia can rapidly resemble the SA....'

[Cries of protest in the hall]

LTF: 'That's what comes of making blocs with the General Staff.... This man is consciously fighting against the working class. He just said it. He bombed the German proletariat, with no regrets.'

global patterns of 'defensive expansionism' and their disdain for the battles and conflicts of real social forces inside Cuba have more than a passing resemblance to the Pabloite view (which they pretend to despise) of 'objective processes' determining all. For the Spartacist tendency, however, one central conclusion must be drawn from the Cuban Revolution -- that the only agency of *world socialist* revolution is the proletariat led by a Trotskyist vanguard.

The WSL, hoping and pretending that its analysis produces a similar conclusion, has only succeeded through the publication of *'Communists Against Revolution'* in proving that its theory is no less bankrupt than its wretched workerist practice. The Healy-like dishonesty and spreading of confusion; the depiction of the Kremlin gang as a working-class force (father of all post-1917 social revolutions); the proselytising of Kautskyism on the state; and the apologetics for that degenerate, cynical creature Tim Wohlforth (today out to pasture in Hansen's SWP) -- these are all murky reflections of the WSL's banal attempts to insinuate itself into the revisionist 'world Trotskyist movement'. With little to distinguish it programmatically from the Pabloites the WSL leadership has looked for a novel 'theory' to mask its sterile politics. In the self-contradictory and trivial efforts of Wohlforth and Westoby, they have found one they deserve. ■

Union/black defence...

(Continued from page 8)

mobilisation of the working class.

To be sure, the SWP -- which today aspires to play the role taken by the Communist Party in the 1930s -- has not attracted any major bourgeois forces into the ANL. It has had to be satisfied with stray Liberal lords and the like -- though the Federation of Conservative Students did lobby the Tory party for affiliation to the ANL. To a large extent, the SWP has had to substitute *itself* for the more traditional expounders of bourgeois social patriotism ('WWII Fighter Pilots Against the Nazis?'). Thus the extraordinary appeals to British patriotism to which we have been treated by Nigel Harris and other ANL/SWP leaders.

The SWP and IMG have not merely been inviting union bureaucrats and representatives of the bourgeoisie to march alongside them in demonstrations aimed at smashing the fascists. To such an invitation we would, of course, have no objections in principle. But the reality of the ANL is wholly different.

Its 'anti-Nazi' propaganda and all its other activities have had to be tailored in such a way as to be acceptable to its current and hoped-for bourgeois and pro-capitalist supporters. Far from attempting serious mobilisations against the fascists, the revisionists use the ANL to cuddle up to 'progressive' enemies of the working class, thus facilitating a 'strategy' of Carnival protests, appeals to the bourgeois state to ban the NF, and the production of mountains of social-patriotic leaflets. And, according to ANL leader Peter Hain, quoted in the August 6 *Observer*, in the coming elections the League will be campaigning against votes to either the NF or the Tories -- in other words giving backhanded endorsement to votes for any 'anti-Nazi' candidates, including its friends in the Liberal Party.

The ANL has tried to abolish the *class* line and replace it by a division between 'Nazis' and 'anti-Nazis', between nasty people and nice people. This is a dangerous illusion: it is the line which the bourgeoisie *wants* us to believe is the central division in society, between 'democracy' and 'totalitarianism' (communism naturally belonging to the latter category). A fight around an ANL-style programme -- even if combined with pseudo-confrontationist demonstrations -- will never defeat fascism. Rather it can only foster the most poisonous democratic illusions in the decaying capitalist social system, which in its death agony breeds and encourages the fascist gangs.

Workers defence and black self-defence

In response to the stepped-up fascist terror, ad-hoc black self-defence groups have reportedly begun to be formed in the Brick Lane area. Marxists can only welcome the appearance of such self-defence squads, but, like the weekly Brick Lane protests, they are clearly not enough to stop the NF. Even in areas of large immigrant concentration like Brick Lane, community-based black self-defence groups necessarily lack the social muscle to do more than stave off the fascists for a period. The only force which has the

cohesion, the moral authority and the numbers to *smash* the NF is the trade union movement.

But what are the union bureaucrats -- all so willing to speak from Anti Nazi League platforms and sign 'anti-fascist' manifestos -- doing to bring out the ranks against the NF? Nothing, of course. More to the point (since duplicitous behaviour by pro-capitalist union leaders is hardly a novelty), what have the 'revolutionaries' of the SWP and IMG been doing towards fighting in the unions for workers defence squads? Again, nothing.

Most union bureaucrats and Labour Party hacks have one stock answer for harassed immigrants facing fascist or racist attack: rely on the police. But some of the more 'left' trades council and union branch secretaries know that illusions in the racist cops are hard to come by in the immigrant communities. They have a different answer: they 'support' black self-defence (from a very safe distance), while deeming workers defence squads 'impractical' or 'unnecessary'. And their faithful lapdogs in the SWP and IMG follow right along -- spurning the hard and unpopular fight *against* the bureaucrats for the formation of workers defence squads based on the unions, instead allying with these same bureaucrats to issue pious 'democratic' pronouncements and cheer on the separate struggles of the oppressed.

As we noted in the founding document of the Spartacist League (Britain):

'For us the fascist threat must be fought and smashed through the mass organisations of the working class. The rest of the left has typically offered up an alternation between legalist, Labourite appeals to the capitalist state and open popular frontism (eg the Anti Nazi League), and substitutionist brawls along the lines of Red Lion Square.' ('Tasks in Britain', *Spartacist Britain* no 1, April 1978)

Reacting to pressure from its own base, the SWP leaders of the ANL have been obliged to fraudulently offer the prospect of a Lewisham-type confrontationist action to counter open fascist provocations in Brick Lane. Their popular-frontist legalism dictates, however, that this be a thoroughly *ersatz* Lewisham -- a hollow imitation utterly devoid of the fighting spirit which characterised that and prior attempts by the left to stop the fascists. And the end product of the ANL/SWP campaign in Brick Lane has been to lead its supporters into a blind alley, ineffectively disguised by the face-saving 'national mobilisation' on August 20.

Yet the answer to pacifist sit-downs in Brick Lane is manifestly *not* a return to Lewisham-style adventurism. The answer is a fight in the labour movement for the full weight of the trade unions to be brought down on the skulls of the National Front scum. As the militant Spartacist League contingent on the August 20 demonstration chanted: 'No to the popular-frontist ANL -- Workers defence guards now!' Link the black self-defence organisations to powerful union defence squads to drive the fascists out of the East End! ■

Birmingham...

(Continued from page 8)

maintain an effective deterrent force, it is crucial that the defence mobilisations be placed on a regular, well-organised footing.

To drive these vermin off the streets for good, however, what is needed is the kind of working class action which shut down Saltley Coke Depot during the 1972 miners' strike. But instead of mobilising the workers in the Midlands car factories, local trade union officials -- backed by the Communist Party (CP) and Anti Nazi League (ANL) -- have been pleading with the state to deal with the fascists. Specifically, they have called on the City Council to ban the British Movement from using the town hall for a forthcoming European fascist rally.

A telegram to the council signed by, among others, leaders of the Birmingham Trades Council, the CP, and the ANL appeals: 'It is not part of the function of the elected civic administration to provide a platform for this organisation to espouse racial hatred and the vile doctrine of Nazism which millions of people fought and died to rid the world of' (quoted in *Morning Star*, 1 August). The fact is that the hundreds of thousands of British workers who 'fought and died' in World War II were led to slaughter for the benefit of British imperialism -- not, as this social-patriotic tract claims, 'to rid the world of' fascism and Nazism.

Calls on the council to decide who can hold political meetings are invitations which estab-

lish a precedent of state interference in political life, and thereby set up future bourgeois attacks on the democratic rights won by the workers movement. The working class can rely only on its own forces to deal with the latter-day Moseleys: the powerful unions of the West Midlands area should be mobilised to smash any attempted fascist meeting. It will be the workers defence squads from Longbridge and Rover Solihull -- not the city fathers in the town hall -- who will crush the racists in Birmingham. ■

Labour...

(Continued from page 2)

splitting the mass base of the Labour Party from its misleadership is urgently posed. In these by-elections, which were widely seen as a referendum on the Labour government's performance, to vote for Labour Party candidates who stand as supporters of Callaghan's viciously anti-working-class policies undercuts this vital task and indeed implies a vote for the "Social Contract", the crucifixion of the British workers. Therefore in the November voting revolutionists could seek to exploit and intensify working-class anger over the Labour government's policies by adopting a policy of conditional non-support to BLP [Labour Party] candidates. Only if a Labour candidate had stood as committed to *support struggles of the workers to break the "Social Contract"* would critical electoral support have been justified.'

Since that time, the list of Labour betrayals has become even more outrageous, including in particular the traitorous Lib-Lab pact. We see no reason to alter our opposition to voting Labour today. 'Vote Labour -- Vote Wage Control' is Uncle Jim's message, which no amount of 'Socialist Campaigns for a Labour Victory' can disguise. Only if Labour decisively *broke* from and repudiated its recent betrayals, or if a Labour candidate committed himself to a programme of *active opposition* to wage control and Lib-Lab coalitionism would it be possible to give critical electoral support, as this would represent a break, however partial, with the class collaboration of the Callaghan government.

Mindful of their Leninist pretensions, the revisionists declare that: yes, their aim too is to crack the Labour Party and build a vanguard party to lead the working class to power. But somehow their 'tactics' and 'perspectives' for splitting Labour always seem to lead these ferocious opponents of social democracy into Labour's camp, smarming up to Callaghan and his 'lefts', but never seriously fighting them politically. Their pleas that 'now is not the time' to stop supporting Labour are all too reminiscent of Alice's exchanges with the Queen:

"The rule is, jam to-morrow and jam yesterday -- but never jam today."
"It *must* come sometimes to 'jam today,'" Alice objected.
"No, it can't," said the Queen. "It's jam every other day: to-day isn't any other day, you know." (*Through the Looking-Glass*)

All fake-left organisations preparing to vote Labour in the coming election have one thing in common: they do not believe for a minute that they will ever supplant the Labour Party. They cannot fight for a break from Labour because they have a menshevik attitude to political struggle: they want to diffuse a more militant, more 'political', more active, more 'socialist' consciousness -- in short a 'better' consciousness to better Labour's soul.

In place of tactical flexibility -- strategic 'critical support' to Labour. In place of revolutionary confidence -- prostration before the Labour Party's mass influence. In place of the struggle for programme and party -- an anaemic 'battle of ideas'. In place of a genuinely independent *organisation* -- the organic Labour faction, *always* 'too small' to challenge the reformists. These are the rules of life for British fake-Marxists, tied to the apron strings of the Second International.

But the end of capitalist exploitation, the establishment of the rule of the working class lies along another road: irreconcilable opposition to the Callaghan government, its wage controls and its traitorous deals with the Liberals. And when the election arrives it will mean saying: No vote to Labour -- no more than to the capitalist parties. Only the fight for an authentically revolutionary, Trotskyist vanguard party, section of a reformed Fourth International, can defeat Labourism and show the way forward to working-class political power.

-- Not Callaghan's capitalist government but a workers government to expropriate the bourgeoisie!

SPARTACIST BRITAIN

Brick Lane:

Union/black defence can smash NF



SL contingent at July 16 anti-fascist demonstration in Brick Lane

Spartacist Britain

Brick Lane in the East End of London has become the latest focal point of the fight against the fascist National Front. Every Sunday morning from mid-July to late August, leftist and immigrant demonstrators have gathered there in an attempt to drive the NF out of an area which it has long regarded as a stronghold.

The demonstrations were launched in response to stepped-up NF-inspired racist attacks in the East End, including the murders of three local Bengali residents since the spring. On July 9, a gang of 150-200 lumpen white youth, many wearing National Front badges, stormed through Brick Lane and the surrounding streets, throwing bottles and lumps of concrete through the windows of shops owned by immigrants, assaulting Asians in the streets, and screaming 'Kill the black bastards'. As is usual whenever such racial attacks occur, the police did not arrive on the scene until after some Asian youths and leftists had banded together to try to stop physically the marauding terror gangs.

The following Sunday, in response to a call from the Hackney and Tower Hamlets Defence Committee and the Anti Nazi League (ANL), 2000 demonstrators occupied the area adjacent to the corner of Brick Lane and Bethnal Green Road. Despite woeful disorganisation, they managed to prevent the fascists from holding their usual weekly rally and newspaper sale on the site. The next day several thousand East End workers went on a one-day strike against racism. Immigrant workers from area sweatshops and poor local shopkeepers were joined in the walkout by, among others, several hundred black and white workers from Ford's Dagenham car factory.

Subsequent Sundays saw further protests, primarily consisting of ANL supporters and local Bengali residents, and ranging from under a hundred on August 13 to 2000 people at an August 20 national mobilisation. On one occasion, July 23, as a result of the classless strategy of the ANL, more than a hundred fascists were able to occupy and hold Brick Lane under police protection despite the presence of several hundred counter-demonstrators.

But while the demonstrators did succeed several times in stopping the Sunday morning fascist rallies, the strategy of the demonstration organisers in the ANL cannot show the way forward to *defeat* the Front, to drive it out of the East End for good. Beginning in mid-July, the ANL raised the call for everyone to come to Brick Lane 'Sunday after Sunday' -- indeed the International Marxist Group (IMG), one of the ANL's main active supporters, called in its August 3 front-page *Socialist Challenge* leader for demonstrations 'every Sunday until the elections are over'. And Sunday after Sunday, Brick Lane has seen a series of inconclusive and badly-organised sit-down protests.

Despite a major national build-up, the demonstration on August 20 attracted a disappointingly small crowd. The IMG had called in

Socialist Challenge for all demonstrators to come to Brick Lane at 8 am -- yet when that time arrived only a tiny group of their own members were present. At midday the protesters finally shuffled off, only to meander in a disorganised and seemingly aimless fashion through East End streets for several hours. The demonstration's organisers provided no effective stewarding, seemingly content to rely on the policemen flanking the marchers to 'protect' them from fascist attack. And when the Long March eventually doubled back to return to its starting place, the bulk of the protesters sat down, some no doubt because they were jaded, some in true peacenik style -- a symbolic gesture in full accord with the mood of moral witness which had marked the entire day. Interestingly, too, the chant 'Sunday after Sunday' was absent from everyone's lips.

Anti Nazi League: a popular front

Despite their 'Marxist' pretensions, the leaders of the ANL (mainly members of the Socialist Workers Party [SWP]) have not attempted to centre their mobilisations on the powerful trade union movement, since that would

disturb their cosy relationship with various do-nothing 'anti-Nazi' union bureaucrats.

It is not always adventurist for left organisations or groups of militants to decide to take upon themselves the suppression of a fascist event. But this cannot form the basis of a *strategy* for a sustained fight against fascism. The SWP and IMG have used the weekly mobilisations of their own members and supporters in aid of the endangered East End Bengalis as a *substitute* for what is really needed -- a serious perspective of struggling in the trade unions to mobilise the *working class* to take the lead in the fight against the fascists.

This class-struggle strategy is rejected by the SWP and IMG because it is thoroughly alien to the whole perspective of the Anti Nazi League. These groups argue that the ANL provides an effective strategy for combatting the NF by building broad-based unity of all 'anti-Nazis' -- from actresses to football managers, from 'Marxists' to Liberals. Naturally, they scoff at the idea that the ANL is a class-collaborationist popular front -- a *roadblock* to defeating the fascist terror gangs through the

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Birmingham:

Fascists attack the Ramp

In an obviously premeditated attack, some fifteen National Front thugs assaulted left-wing newspaper sellers in Birmingham on July 8, injuring three of them. The attack took place on the Ramp outside New Street Shopping Precinct, the traditional selling place for the left on Saturdays. Since then the fascists have been denied the opportunity for further attacks, as local left groups have combined to provide sufficient numbers to fend off would-be assailants.

The attack was clearly different from past local confrontations with the fascists. The August edition of the Birmingham monthly community magazine *Broadside* quoted one of the victims: 'When you're selling papers on the ramp, there's often clashes with the Right, but never anything like this. This was obviously a planned attack.' Subsequent evidence shows clearly that the fascists' intention is to drive the left off the Ramp altogether, doubtless to turn it into their own stomping ground.

In early August, the local anti-fascist left received a tip-off that the British Movement and some young NFers, estimated at 25 in all, were planning to beat up leftists at the Ramp on

August 5. In anticipation of a fascist assault, considerable numbers were mobilised in the latter part of the day by several left-wing groups. The fascists too showed up. A leader of the British Movement in full jackbooted regalia was observed with another fascist in the 'London Grill' cafe, conferring about tactics for attacking the Ramp. But in the face of the large left turn-out they had to crawl off, unable to mount the ambush they had planned.

A successful defence of the Ramp would be an important blow against the fascist scum in the West Midlands, an area where they have some strength. As an immediate short-term measure a defence bloc among left groups is both valuable and effective, although insufficient as a strategy to crush the fascists. To date, due largely to the considerable efforts of the Spartacist League, sufficient forces have been mobilised to defend the left's selling place every week. This has occurred despite the lackadaisical attitude of other left groups, particularly the International Marxist Group and Socialist Workers Party, both of which have considerably more forces than the SL in Birmingham. In order to

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